

In these few words, President Obama provided valuable propaganda to the terrorists. He told our enemies that our intelligence operators were wrong in what they did, an admission that will be seized upon by our enemies to fuel the hatred of Americans. Is it any surprise that the morale at the CIA has been severely damaged? Our terror fighters need to know whether the President has their back or will stab them in the back.

Unfortunately, the President completely disregarded the damage his decision would have on the CIA. He completely disregarded the damage his decision would have on our ability to get the intelligence we need to stop terrorist attacks. He completely disregarded the ammo his decision would give the terrorists bent on our destruction. Instead of these critical national security concerns, the President's decision was a political one aimed at appeasing the far leftwing.

The President even tried to claim that the ACLU's Freedom of Information Act request made the release of these memos necessary. But the first exemption under the law is for "classified secret matters or national defense or foreign policy." The memos on the CIA terrorist interrogation program certainly meet those definitions. At the very least, President Obama should have made that argument in court. Instead, he handed over a victory—not for national security but for the ACLU.

While many in the media are getting mired in the details of each of these bad decisions, the bigger question is this: What is this administration's strategy for confronting the terrorist threat and keeping America safe? The world did not suddenly become safer when President Obama was elected.

Instead of telling Americans the strategy to keep our Nation safe, the latest Obama administration move has been staging costly glamour shots of Air Force One. I am not sure if everybody has heard about this stunt, but earlier this week the White House decided to update their photos of Air Force One—only they chose to take the photos of the jet at the Statue of Liberty with a fighter jet escort.

Across downtown Manhattan—where the Twin Towers once stood—New Yorkers were panicking. Thousands fled New York skyscrapers. You see, New Yorkers were not told this glamour shot was going to happen. After living through the horrors of the September 11 attacks, New Yorkers, of course, feared that another attack was happening. And 9/11 was fresh in their memories.

While the Obama administration tried to shrug off this incident, I think it is telling. This stunt is a symbol of how far from their minds the attacks of 9/11 are.

In addition to the administration's glamour shot stunt, President Obama's advisers have been busy releasing classified information that only tells the side of the story they want to share. I

think everyone knows this, but let me lay out the details.

First, the Director of National Intelligence, Admiral Blair, in a letter to the intelligence community, said the interrogations provided "high value information" and gave the U.S. Government a "deeper understanding of the al Qaeda organization that was attacking this country." Blair also detailed how Congress was repeatedly briefed on the program. But in the public statement which had to go through White House clearance, these details were left out.

Next: The White House releases the memos that describe in detail the interrogation techniques that were used. But missing—in fact, I assume purposefully redacted—is the information on the lifesaving intelligence we received from these interrogations.

Also, President Obama—and many Democrats in Congress—supported the release of the CIA memos but are now opposing the release of information on what Members of Congress were briefed on the program.

Now, let me get this straight. So the facts about our interrogation program of terrorists—how we do it, and the strict limits on it to avoid torture—are fair game for release, but who and what Congress was told needs to remain secret?

I think the President's advisers got it wrong. You see, it is not supposed to be cherry-picking time in Washington today. Unfortunately, the Obama administration is not above politicizing intelligence.

Message to the administration: Get a new calendar. The election is over. With victory comes responsibility. It is now up to the Obama administration to keep our Nation safe. You are in charge of protecting the American people and stopping terror attacks—I pray with the same success the previous administration did every day since 9/11.

While President Obama failed the national security test at the 100th day mark, the final grade is not in yet. It is up to the President to choose our terror fighters over terrorists, to choose troops over ACLU lawyers, to choose national security over politics.

Protecting our families from terrorist attacks should not be a political issue, it is an American one.

Mr. President, I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Colorado is recognized.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the remaining Republican time be reserved.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority time has expired.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I believe I have 25 minutes. I would appreciate it if you would let me know when I have 5 minutes remaining.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair will do so.

Mr. BENNET. Thank you, Mr. President.

## PROMISE OF A BETTER LIFE

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, today we celebrate the first 100 days of our new President's administration. It has been somewhat less remarked upon, but this week also happens to mark my first 100 days in office.

Together, we have done important work in these 100 days. We have taken decisive action to get our economy moving again. We have provided better access to health care for our children. We have made the workplace fairer for women.

For me, these 100 days have provided a remarkable opportunity to listen to Coloradans. In dozens of townhall meetings, in each and every corner of the State, in cities and small towns, in good weather and bad, I have listened to thousands of Coloradans—young and old, Republicans, Democrats, and Independents, teachers, nurses, farmers, workers, ranchers, and small business owners, people from all walks of life with every conceivable point of view.

I have been struck by how much—despite the trials we face at this moment in our history and despite whatever disagreements we might have—more than anything the people of Colorado long to build a better future for the next generation.

America has always embraced the promise of a better life for our children.

My family's story is no different. After their lives were shattered by World War II, my grandparents set their sights on Franklin Roosevelt's America as the one place they could rebuild their lives. And it was.

My mother had even more opportunities than my grandparents dreamed, and she and my father were able to create a better life for me, my brother, and my sister. Since our founding, generation after generation, we have worked to form a more perfect union, always fulfilling the promise of a better life for those who come after us.

Yet now that promise is in question.

I am here today as the father of three young daughters of my own—Caroline, Halina, and Anne. I think of them and worry that we are at risk of being the first generation of Americans to have less opportunity than we ourselves were given.

Our economy is in turmoil; 5.1 million Americans have lost their jobs since the beginning of this crisis, and our unemployment rate is at 8.5 percent and rising. Between 2000 and 2007, median family income in this country actually declined by over \$300. At the same time, the cost of health care rose by nearly 80 percent and the cost of higher education by roughly 60 percent.

The gulf between rich and poor has gotten wider. Americans are now less likely than people living in a number of other industrialized countries to improve their economic status in their lifetime. As many as 100 million Americans now live in families earning less in real terms than their parents did at the same age.

This crisis stemmed from much more than foreclosed houses and credit swaps. It is a symptom of this generation's lack of attention to the legacy of our grandparents who built for the future. Now we must ask ourselves who we will be as a country when we emerge from this crisis. Will we answer the call of this time or will we fall back on the same tired arguments of the past?

This time demands that we cast our eyes to the future, that we take a 21st century approach to meet our 21st century challenges and seize our 21st century opportunities. With President Obama's leadership and our resilient American spirit, we can emerge from this crisis stronger and truer to our creed than when we entered it.

Each generation of Americans with hope for their children has courageously shed old ways of thinking and, on their behalf, reached out to new ideas. We are no different. We, too, must be willing to abandon our commitments to the weary forms of the past and attend to the future. That is our cause.

We have to address critical structural issues stifling our economy and threatening our children's opportunities. We need to pursue comprehensive financial reform that will prevent the kind of recklessness that got us into this mess. We have a rising deficit, and we must bring discipline to our budgets, even as we invest in the future. We have a unique opportunity this year to drastically reform our health care system and control its skyrocketing costs, and we must seize it. It is time to invest in the new energy economy and break our dependence on foreign oil.

If we are going to emerge from this economic crisis and succeed in the long run, we must fundamentally change public education in this country. Throughout our history, public schools have allowed America to make good on her promise to the next generation. Our schools propelled our children toward their parents' aspirations and prepared them to rise to the challenges of their times.

If we are honest with ourselves, we see that our public schools too often become traps—traps that perpetuate a cycle of poverty and foster mediocrity. Our children—my girls and millions of others like them—are attending schools that were built to prepare their grandparents for an economy that no longer exists. Our public education system, as designed, does not work well enough for all children in this country, and for our poorest children barely works at all.

Across America, 1.2 million children drop out of high school each year. Globally, we rank 20th among industrialized nations for high school graduation rates. Forty years ago we were first. Seventy percent of our country's eighth graders can't read at grade level. On average, a 9-year-old from a low-income family is already 3 years behind their high income peers, has a 1-

in-2 chance of graduating from high school, and a 1-in-10 chance of finishing college. Despite many efforts to close our stubborn achievement gap, a report released yesterday shows we have made almost no progress. How can we as Americans accept this reality, especially when none of us here would accept these odds for our own children? These are our children too.

There are teachers throughout the country who have rejected the defeatism that too many of us have accepted for our schools. They have come in early and stayed late. They have visited their students' houses and bought school supplies out of their own pockets. They have expected more from their students than their students knew to expect from themselves. Yet too many of us have accepted the existing odds, considering them a natural consequence of poverty. At the same time, we have entered into tiresome debates—debates that take ideology seriously and the fates of our children lightly.

Children's futures have been wasted while adults have endlessly debated techniques for assessing failing schools instead of changing or closing schools that are obviously failing on every dimension that can be assessed. We have debated modest and incremental reforms instead of doing the hard work of identifying successful school structures and human capital strategies and taking them to scale. We have been stuck debating whether teachers should be paid more based on merit, while roughly half of our teachers quit in the first 5 years of their career. A narrow, small politics has allowed us to duck ever making real choices about anything, and it has, failure after failure, shriveled our shared ambition for America's children. As long as we have these same conversations, today's 9-year-olds will see their younger brothers and sisters enter fourth grade with the same low odds of graduating from college they have, just as they saw their older brothers and sisters face the same odds, generation after generation.

When I took over as the superintendent for Denver public schools, in a school district of 75,000 children, only 33 African-American students and 61 Latino students—fewer than four classrooms worth of kids—scored proficient on the State's tenth grade math test, a test that measures a junior high school standard of proficiency in Europe. Spending time with our students and their families in Denver, I was struck not by their fragility but by their resilience. Their parents—like many before them—had made tremendous sacrifices to provide their children with greater opportunity. The students I knew were willing to work harder and stay in school longer. We were selling them short.

I joined the Denver public schools with kind of an abstract understanding that what was happening in our schools was unfair. My experience there left me with a profound sense of urgency to

change what is unfair and fundamentally unjust.

We can do better, and we will do better. In Denver we have made progress. From 2005 to 2008, Denver students scored higher in reading, math, writing, and science. We did not get there by doing things the same way as they had been done before. We closed failing schools and opened new ones. We implemented a groundbreaking teacher pay system that rewards teachers who improve their students' performance and provides incentives for teachers to go to the neediest schools. We accomplished this change by working with the union. It took a lot of effort. We had a lot of disagreements, but we made progress together because of a fundamental commitment by all of us to get the job done, not just score political points.

With the leadership of our mayor and our city council, voters expanded our early childhood education. As a result, this year there are 1,500 more 4-year-olds in full day programs, a 300-percent increase. We increased full-day kindergarten by 25 percent, so that for the first time more than 95 percent of our 5-year-olds have the benefit of a full day of school. Research tells us there is no smarter investment we can make.

In 2008, we launched a school performance framework that measures the progress of actual students year over year throughout their career, rather than meaningless measurement of one year's class against the next year's class.

We still have work to do in Denver. There is still a long way to go before these reforms materially change the odds for our students, but we are moving in the right direction. In other districts we will see similar success if we support reform efforts that work.

Our job in the Senate should be to help the administration spur innovation and identify and expand what works. I look forward to working with our Education Secretary, Arne Duncan, my colleagues here—and I notice our former Education Secretary, the Senator from Tennessee, is here today, and I am glad that he is here—my colleagues here, as well as parents, teachers, students, and community members in Colorado to support innovative solutions to the problems plaguing our schools.

Our commitment to our children and grandchildren requires that we hold ourselves to a higher standard than we have in the past. This is not a time to spend new money on old programs or to timidly attempt changes that have already failed too many of our children. Now is the time to reimagine our schools as magnets for talent, centers for communities, and incubators of innovation. Only then can we ensure that our students are getting the 21st century skills that will equip them for the new economy.

We must do the same for our teachers. As President Obama said yesterday:

In a global economy where the greatest job qualification isn't what you can do but what you know, our teachers are the key to our Nation's success; to whether America will lead the world in the discoveries and the innovations and economic prosperity of this new century.

Study after study has shown that nothing makes a greater difference to student learning than great teaching. We need to support effective teachers and make sure they stay in the classroom. That means creating school environments where teachers and students want to spend time, and it means restructuring our schools and our school calendar so that teachers have time to plan together and learn from each other. Also, we need to pay teachers in ways that reward their success and provide incentives for them to stay in the profession. More fundamentally, we need to recognize that our system of hiring, compensation, and training designed deep in the last century, is utterly inadequate for 21st century labor market realities. In 1960, a gallon of gas cost 30 cents. Elvis and the Everly Brothers were at the top of the charts. A first-year lawyer earned about the same as a first-year teacher, and women had basically two professional choices: becoming a nurse or going into the classroom. In 2009, as nation after nation moves past us in educational achievement, we are kidding ourselves if we think a teacher recruitment and retention plan that came in when the Hula Hoop went out—and effectively subsidized our schools by limiting women's opportunities—is a serious response to America's needs.

We must invest in proven training that equips teachers with the content, knowledge, and classroom management skills to be successful in helping their students, and we need to ensure that we provide ongoing, high-quality professional development that actually helps them do a better job in the classroom; otherwise, we risk losing our best teachers.

We need to expand alternative pipelines for teachers, to enhance the traditional pathways we already have. President Obama has called on the Nation to create a new army of teachers. We must recruit a diverse, excellent, and committed group of Americans to teach our children. The talent is all around us—in the veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, the baby boomers who have spent their careers running successful businesses or working in manufacturing or medicine or law, and the college graduates looking to find a rewarding vocation—all of whom can inspire and challenge our students to become the engineers who will build green cities, the doctors who will cure cancer, and the entrepreneurs who will start businesses we can't yet even imagine. As we open the profession to allow talented and committed people to become teachers, we must have rigorous selection for every spot in front of a class, and replicate effective training for new teachers.

As we work with States and districts to redesign our schools for the 21st cen-

tury, we should do so in conversation with business and labor to inform our efforts about what skills the market will require. Competitive workers must be problem solvers, not just test takers. They must be able to think critically and communicate effectively in multiple mediums. Students won't need to write cursive; they will need to know how to use technology to solve tough problems. They don't need only to memorize facts; they need to understand how to filter and use the information at their fingertips.

We need updated standards that reflect these 21st century skills. We should invite States to embrace voluntary national standards, benchmarked against international norms that allow the public to see the progress students are actually making from year to year. We need an accurate measuring system so that we know when reforms are working and when students are achieving. We need to ensure that the tests we give kids ask them to deploy the knowledge and skills they have, rather than demonstrate their ability to take a test. And we must ensure that when we do give students tests, teachers get the results in time to use them to drive their instruction.

But our tests shouldn't be the sole driver of our instruction. We should look beyond the narrow window of standardized test scores, to parent and community engagement and student retention rates. We should expand learning opportunities to start earlier, be broader in scope, and beckon everyone in the community.

Our schools should become centers where communities gather for skills and services. Schools are uniquely positioned to deliver health and support services. Research shows a statistical link between nutrition and achievement for all students. We need to look at nutrition in schools not as something extra but as central to student success.

Our schools should be on the cutting edge of using new technology for both teaching and learning. Technology can connect students to resources and teachers to each other. Effective use of technology can allow a teacher in a rural area to get feedback from a mentor elsewhere. We should be using technology to disseminate effective practices and share great lesson plans. We can look to technology to help train teachers in new ways by simulating classroom experiences and delivering real-time feedback on lesson plans.

There is something wrong when students who enter the schoolhouse find they are moving backwards in time, leaving behind all the technology that in the rest of their day expands and enriches their lives.

While we know we can't fix our schools by spending more money on the same inadequate programs, we must commit to funding what works in our schools. We now have the largest investment in public education in history

with which to do it. The stimulus package and the budget are working in tandem to increase access to early childhood education. States and districts are competing with one another to build on their efforts to revamp standards and turn around failing schools. There are additional resources to reduce high school dropout rates and increase college graduation rates.

If we continue to spark this kind of innovation, if we can allow ourselves to think big again about education, we can start to imagine school buildings as prototypes for energy efficiency and classrooms as job training centers for the new energy economy—preparing parents and students alike. School-based health care can advance from one nurse stretched between multiple schools to clinics that are leaders in efficient health care. School lunches can progress from packaged feedings in the cafeteria to live lessons on nutrition and wellness. In sum, our schools can become what they should be: the institutions that are preparing our children and their children to lead in the 21st century.

Our cause is clear. It is time for policies that serve not the ideologies of adults but the needs of kids. I will be working in the coming months to develop legislation that will outline ways in which the Federal Government can better support our States and school districts in providing a public education that meets the challenges and possibilities of our times.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, as well as with parents, teachers, students, and community leaders across Colorado to ensure that we do our part to increase opportunity for our children. We will know we have succeeded when we see not only more students graduating high school but more of those graduates going on to complete college as well. We will not only see the achievement gap shrink, but we will see the United States once again lead the world in academic achievement.

We are lucky. In our time, history is once again beginning to run in the direction of change. We have the chance to honor our grandparents' example and move forward together to create a better future for our children. If we do, those children and their children will say we rose to the moment, that we laid down our adult burdens and our differences to lift up our country and our children instead. Let them say that a spark flew in America in this new century that ignited a generation of educators, children, parents, and communities and gave them courage to abandon the status quo for a better future. Let our schools once again be the cradle of the American dream and act to fulfill the solemn promise of one generation to the next.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Tennessee is recognized.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for a couple of minutes to comment on Senator BENNET's speech.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### SENATOR BENNET'S MAIDEN SPEECH

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I congratulate the Senator from Colorado on what we call in the Senate his maiden address. I also had the privilege of hearing Senator UDALL's speech when he made his on renewable energy. I was glad to hear these today.

The Senator from Colorado has focused on a subject he has worked on hard and which is central to every part of our ability to improve our schools. It is one recognized by our new Education Secretary who, I think, is President Obama's best new appointee. It is the question of how do we reward outstanding teaching.

Every time we deal with education, we are ultimately reminded that it boils down to the parent and the teacher. What the parent cannot do, the teacher has to step in and finish. In so many cases, whether it is a gifted child or a child who hasn't been read to at home or a child with disabilities or a child who needs a music lesson, it takes a gifted teacher to do the best job to help the child reach his or her potential.

We are still, as the Senator said, 50 or 60 or 70 years behind in recognizing that our country has changed and that women have many opportunities outside the home. We cannot trap them into teaching. We need to attract them and keep them, as well as outstanding men.

Senator BENNET has been successful in his work in Denver and in finding ways to initiate that. The Secretary wants to do that. I worked on that in Tennessee. I have said to the Secretary of Education if he leaves after 4 or 8 years having left a legacy of many different ways of improving ways to reward outstanding teaching, he will have done more than all of the other secretaries of education put together.

As Albert Shanker once said, "If we can have master plumbers, we can have master teachers."

Again, I congratulate the Senator from Colorado for his focus on education in his maiden address. I was happy and privileged to be on the Senate floor to hear that.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Colorado is recognized.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Tennessee, and I acknowledge his great work as Secretary of Education. This is one of those issues on which I think Republicans and Democrats have a lot of work they can do together. There isn't one solution. This is a time when we are long overdue, and we have been short on an-

swers. I think the Education Secretary is perfectly positioned to carry on the work that needs to be done. I look forward to working with the Senator, and I appreciate him enduring my speech.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BENNET). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, I also had the opportunity to be here presiding in the chair to hear the Senator from Colorado in his maiden speech. I want to congratulate him and tell him he has done an excellent job in the Senate, as I have observed him over the last 100 days.

I think Senator BENNET has hit on an issue that is important to all of us. If we are going to move forward as a nation, we are going to have to do it by focusing on education. It is heartening to see that we have a President, President Barack Obama, who cares about education with the same passion, I believe, the Senator from Colorado has.

One of the things the Senator from Colorado noted is that we have to focus on teachers. He talked about a comprehensive approach, an approach to education that is going to move us forward in the 21st century. Teachers have to be a big part of it. Parents have to be a big part of it. As the Senator from Colorado noted, based on his work in Denver and in chairing the Denver education effort, if parents aren't involved, we are not going to be able to move forward.

In addition, one of the big things Senator BENNET knows is, this No Child Left Behind law needs to be revamped. It is not doing right by our children. We have to take a look at that piece of legislation with the ideas that he mentioned and make sure we put into place a piece of legislation and a reauthorization that is going to empower our teachers and our parents and move us forward on the education front.

Again, I just wanted to congratulate Senator BENNET. It was a great start with that maiden speech. I thought the exchange the Senator had with Senator ALEXANDER was a good one. It shows that we can work together.

Senator BENNET from Colorado has shown a bipartisanship in his first 100 days. I very much want to congratulate him and tell him I have enjoyed serving with him and look forward to serving with him for a very long time.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all time under morning business be yielded back and the Senate now begin consideration of the conference report on the budget.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is now closed.

#### CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2010—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will begin debate on the conference report to accompany S. Res. 13.

The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I also want to recognize the excellent first speech that the Senator from Colorado just gave. I had a chance to hear part of it on the Senate floor and part of it in the cloakroom. We welcome him. If his first speech is any measure, he is going to make a significant contribution. So we are delighted to have somebody of his thoughtfulness and quality as part of this body.

Mr. President, the Senate now begins consideration of the conference agreement on the budget for 2010. I think we have to see this budget in its context. We have to understand what this administration has inherited from the previous administration. To be clear, it is a colossal mess—the worst recession since the Great Depression, a doubling of debt under the previous administration, and a more than tripling of foreign holdings of U.S. debt.

I try to suppress partisanship in my discussions on the Senate floor, but it is impossible to overlook the record of the previous administration. They have slammed this economy into the ditch. President Obama is put in the position of the cleanup crew. It is not pretty or easy, and it is going to be a difficult challenge for this country to come out of a policy stew that is impossible to choke down.

Let me be clear in my own view of how we got here. I believe we had an overly loose monetary policy under the control of the Federal Reserve ever since 9/11, an overly loose fiscal policy under the control of the White House and the Congress, record deficits, a massive buildup of debt—when the economy was relatively strong and right before the baby boom generation started to retire. That is remarkable.

If you look back into history, it is rare to have at the same time an overly loose monetary policy, low interest rates, Congress and the White House